

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED

On the thirteenth of December, 1776

THE LATE DAY OF

NATIONAL HUMILIATION,

TO A

Congregation of Protestant-Dissenters,

In Saint-Saviour-Gate, York,

And published at the request of the Audience,

BY

NEWCOME CAPPE.

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MDCLXIV

PROVERBS xxviii. 9.

*He that turneth away his ear from bearing the law,
even his prayer shall be abomination.*

IN times of calamity or danger, whether public or private, it is very natural to betake ourselves to God; and then, if ever, we are in the disposition to inquire on what terms God will hear us.

We are not at liberty to regard the present circumstances of our country as a state of prosperity and security. Religion does not ordinarily rule either in the hearts or cabinets of princes. When Councils call for national humiliations and intercessions to assist and prosper their deliberations, it is a natural and obvious inference that all things are not well, or that they are not likely to continue so: for it is, at least, as true of statesmen as of other men, that while "they know no changes they fear not God."

An adversary there is, whose resentment it was not thought dangerous to provoke, and whose resistance it was not thought indecent to despise, in the negotiation with which no divine guidance and no blessing of heaven was implored, on which the sword was drawn in confidence of human strength; against this adversary, the nation has been called to fast, and

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pray,

pray, and humble herself in the sight of God, though from *their* humiliations we turned away with indignation. To this call, there are thousands in the land, serious, judicious, loyal subjects, who could pay no more than an hypocritical obedience. Hypocrisy is not piety. What then is the injunction to commit it? It is neither piety nor prudence. If the injunction is enforced by the denunciation of pains and penalties, there is as little charity as godliness in the imposition: and if the forfeiture of divine favor, if the wrath and indignation of God is promised to the delinquent, there is as little policy as charity in the threatening; for who ever heard that the thunders of heaven waited on a statesman's bidding?

These things, my brethren, no wise and thoughtful man will number among the circumstances that suggest hope and comfort concerning the peace and prosperity of our native country. But these are not *all* the circumstances that demand and justify the humiliations of this day.

Do the divisions of a house, of a family, of a nation speak well concerning their stability and happiness? Does growing debt say any thing desirable concerning the property and the independence of a people? Does dissipation promise that they shall continue to be wise? and luxury that they shall continue to be strong?

That

That private virtue has so small a share in public characters: That public virtue is in so many instances trampled under foot by interested ambition, consumed by party-zeal, or suffered to die away through a cold and careless insensibility; do these things promise well concerning public interests? That Nobles are so commonly more honourable in name than character: That the Guardians of the people are reproached by their electors with corruption, while *they* are *themselves* liable to the same severe recrimination; are these the omens of national felicity?

That the Constitution, notwithstanding large-enough experience of the inconveniences of such an imperfection, and repeated remonstrances against it, should, in any instance, still remain unequal, dangerously and unjustly partial, claiming an equal degree of power, where there is not an equal guard against the abuse of it: That the Law should, in any instance, be unrighteous and oppressive; that dutiful and loyal subjects, rendering unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, but reserving for the God of Cæsar the things that are God's, should owe to connivance and forbearance what they have a right to claim, on less humiliating, on surer, firmer, and more equitable grounds; that the most dutiful and respectful application for the repeal of laws, so inconsistent with the common rights of subjects and the fundamental laws of Christianity, so incompatible with the

general spirit and the true interests of the British Constitution; that such repeated applications, supported by the most cogent arguments, seconded and recommended by the Guardians of the people, should be frowned on from a higher station, and rejected by those who ought to know, and would be thought to believe, that the kingdom of Christ is not of this world; do these things, such violations of the civil rights of men, such insults on the religious liberties of the subjects of Christ; do these things speak peace to our country?

A supine and worldly Clergy, with the exception of some names, absolutely many, proportionally few, above my praise, who have at heart the interests of truth and virtue, whose manners and whose talents support and adorn our common christianity; a supine and worldly Clergy, who having reversed the apostle's maxim of conduct toward the people, seek not *them* but *theirs*; who are better practis'd in the affairs, the manners, and the interests of the world than in the word and the works of God; easier and happier any where than in the duties of their office; a part of whom, instead of keeping that which is committed to their trust, usurping an authority which Jesus has not given them, lend it to creeds and articles, in which genuine christianity is in a manner lost, which they themselves *oppose* in their teaching, while they *impose* them by their power; another part of

of whom, acknowledging the doctrine to be unchristian, and the imposition unrighteous, tamely acquiesce in it without any thing more vigorous in behalf of Jesus and his truth, than the feeble wish that things were otherwise; can such a Clergy, who *ought* to be the "lights of the world, and the salt of the earth," in peace edify the people committed to their care, and in danger comfort them? Can a supine and worldly Clergy preserve them from such corruptions as will need no severe and unwelcome operations of divine providence to reform them?

The prospects that are suggested by a Priesthood such as this, are they improved and brightened by the merits of a priest-despising Laity? Some of whom, through the influence of vice and unbelief, hate and revile the ministers of religion: Some of whom, thro' stupid carelessness or impious self-conceit, neglect the ordinances and institutions of religion; whose business and whose pleasures keep no sabbaths; who forsake the assembling of themselves together but for the purposes of ungodly gain, of irreligious dissipation or licentious self-indulgence? Some indeed there are, who are not without the semblance of religion, yet their religion is *but* a semblance, floating in the head, sounding on the tongue, conspicuous enough in the house of God, but by themselves not *felt* in the genuine sentiments of piety upon the heart

heart, nor by others *seen* in the genuine influences of piety on their conversation. Some there are, whose religion is indeed *felt*, whose religion does reach the heart, yet reacheth, not to purify but to corrupt it; not to sweeten it with that love which Christ himself has made the badge of his disciples, but to embitter it against all those who conceive not of his gospel as they themselves conceive of it; of *no* power to unite, but of *much* to disunite them from their brethren; of *no* power to feed the sources of social duty, and to strengthen the principles of self-government, but of *much* to loose the bond of perfectness, and to destroy that charity which is the end of the commandment.

Are there not among us, are there not in our religious assemblies, are there not in *this* society,—let me ask it without offence and not without effect,—are there not, in this society, things that correspond not to that apostolic law “Let all things be done decently and in order?”—Say, Is it decent that while the resort to company and entertainments is sufficiently zealous and abundantly early, the resort to the house of God should be tardy and reluctant? Is it decent that the word of God, those scriptures that are “able to make us wise unto salvation,” should ordinarily be heard, in this place, by the *least* part of this society, and by them heard but imperfectly in the midst of continual distractions? Is it decent that,

that, when the institutions of religion are begun, you should come into this house of God with less composure and decorum, with more noise and carelessness than to the visit of a respected or even a familiar friend? Is it decent that from the ordinances of God's house you should absent yourselves for reasons that would not detain you from any other visit? Is it decent that when present here in body, you should be absent in spirit? Is it decent that the careless air, the vacant look, the drowsy eye should bespeak, beyond possibility of doubt, an indifference or inattention to the instructions and admonitions of God's word? Is it decent that from the praises and supplications that ye here tender unto God, your minds should be capable of being diverted by every trifle by which the eye or ear may happen to be struck? Are these things, my brethren, the effects of zeal in the service of God? the fruits of undissembled piety? the symptoms of serious religion? Is *here* any evidence that ye improve the talents for which ye are to account? Do these things suggest any hope that ye are the better for the ordinances of religion? Do these things yield any pleasing prospects that, by the means of grace, ye will grow in grace? Is it *thus* that by the word of God ye can be sanctified? Are these the considerations that could justify me if I should boast of *you*, that ye have thrown nothing into the aggregate of national guilt, and might therefore have excused yourselves

yourselfes if you had taken no share in the present national humiliation?—No.—You will own that these things yield you no comfort, and encourage no hope in God. You will acknowledge that humiliation becomes *you* as well as others, and you will agree with me that the national guilt is great enough to need no farther aggravation from any thing that is wrong in *us*.

For, tell me, is not this the land where Reason has attained to her most exquisite improvement, and where the Gospel is enjoyed in uncorrupted purity?—Look at the manners of your country: what say *they*? To which do they better correspond, to which do they more properly belong, to the children of light and of the day, or to the children of the night and of darkness? Where do you see that conformity to the image of the Son of God, which is the only test of genuine christianity? Where do you *not* see those vices both of the flesh and of the spirit practised without fear, and avowed without shame, of which, even the charity that is of Christ, that hopeth all things, cannot hope that the votaries thereof are *his*.

While Unbelief, the child of Vanity and Impatience, and the parent of Folly and Licentiousness, retails her feeble sophisms and her awkward ridicule against that divine Instructress, whom she loves not because she knows her not;
how

how many are there, profess and serious believers, who have engrafted on the truth as it is in Jesus what is the proper object, if not of sarcastic, yet, of serious invective; and who have also loaded the argument of their Advocates with the inefficacy of that doctrine, which professes to be "a doctrine according to godliness," "the power of God unto salvation," and the divine original of which they own? While Infidelity is every where producing its proper fruits, where is it not that Faith lies dead in trespasses and sins?

In this land of light, where Religion freely offers herself to examination, and proposes her arguments to be tried, and entreats that it may be seen if they are wanting, can it be innocent wilfully to overlook, or wantonly to reject, the most important of our Master's talents, and the most precious gift of God? To confound the Gospel with those corrupt exhibitions of it which have no warrant in the Christian Oracles, and which those oracles *condemn*; while this book of God itself lies open in the view of all men, thus to confound the *gospel* with the *corruptions* of it, and thence to argue against *the truth as it is in Jesus*; is this ingenuous? is this innocent? is it not to confound the guiltless with the guilty? is it not to slander and calumniate, and to judge unrighteous judgment? *Casually* and *causelessly* to have taken up a suspicion of the gospel, and because it has been taken up, to retain and cherish it; to nurse

this unbelief with care and diligence, by collecting difficulties that need no solution, and by *magnifying* arguments, too minute, without such aid from within the mind itself, to make any sort of impression on it; to carry this unbelief, for encouragement, to the Scorners's chair; to strengthen it by exercising it in hardy jests, in bold assertions and licentious witticisms; is this the trial to which pretensions to divine authority should be put? is this the reverence that is due to such pretensions? is this the enquiry of candor, of sobriety, of reason? is this the love of truth? is this the improvement of intelligence? are these the symptoms of a good and honest heart? are these the Characters that speak peace and comfort to our country? The unbelief of *this country* has no such apology to plead as the unbelief of *other* countries, where Religion clothes herself in the melancholy or fantastic garbs of Superstition, and where she fights the battles of the Lord with the sword of Persecution. The unbelief of *these times* has no such excuse to cover it as in the days when the nature of religion was less accurately understood, and the evidences of it less copiously, less judiciously, or less constantly displayed. Since the miracles on which the gospel stands have been so often shewn to be most credibly attested; since the prophecies that bear witness to it, have been so often shewn to have been most accurately accomplished; since all the various evidences of it have

have, from on all sides, been continually poured in upon the mind, the unbelief of Britain approaches much nearer to that infidelity of the Jews, which brought down the wrath of God upon them, and scattered them, for the witnesses of his truth, among all the nations under heaven. Of the unbelief, the stupid carelessness, the affected indifference, the contemptuous insult with which the gospel of God is treated, what is the genuine language?—Is not this the language of it, “Who is the Lord that we should serve him? Depart from us, for we desire not the knowlege of thy ways.”—Are these the sentiments that will justify hope in God? What are the prospects of a serious mind concerning such a country, where Unbelief, under such aggravations, though it reigns not on the Throne, is found both in the highest and the lowest ranks of life, is found among our Counsellors, is found among our Senators, is found in civil, is found in military offices, is found even in the sacred offices of religion; where, notwithstanding that it spreads among the *Vulgar*, it constitutes an essential part of the *polite* and *fashionable* character, and grows with the growing dissipations of the age? For such a land what is there to hope? If thus they “turn away their ear from hearing the law”, what claim have they on God that he shall not “turn away his ear from their prayer, and from them his mercy.”

But if, in this land of light, unbelief consists not, ordinarily, with integrity and innocence, what shall we say of the Believer "who crucifies unto himself the Son of God afresh, and puts him unto open shame?" Is it the conduct of Unbelievers only that admits not of an excuse? Is it *their* guilt alone that excites our apprehensions for our country? Is it here that our *whole* demerit lies? Is it nothing more common with us to say to Christ "Lord, Lord," than "to do the will of his Father who is in heaven?" Do Practice and Profession go hand in hand? is it nothing criminal that they do not? Is it a cause of humiliation that Infidelity neglects God's great salvation, and none that *we* "give no more earnest heed to the things which we have received?" To *betray* the gospel, is this less criminal than to *oppose* it? While Infidelity turns away from or resists every other argument, does it betoken no indifference about the honor of the gospel, no disloyalty to him whom we acknowledge God to have set over us, no unfaithfulness to the interests of our brethren and to our own, to hold the truth in unrighteousness, and to keep back that most powerful recommendation of the truth as it is in Jesus, that by this truth we are sanctified? Is the gospel a talent which it is *criminal* causelessly or wilfully to *reject*, and, at the same time, a talent which *receiving* we may hide, may dishonor, may abuse, and be *guiltless*?

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If to be christians in name would support our hope, there were little need of this day's humiliations: But if to give success to our prayers it be needful that we be christians indeed and in truth, however you may speak peace to your own souls, I know no warrant to justify your security and confidence: For, tell me, though we rank among the first of christian countries, is the character of this country christian? To what could you appeal in support of that assertion?

Would you alledge in proof of it, that we have learnt to call the vilest vices by the softest names? that intemperance is exalted into *sociability*, lewdness into *gaiety*, adultery into *gallantry*, profaneness and obscenity into *vivacity* and *spirit*, frivolousness into *fashionableness*, and hypocrisy into *politeness*? Would you produce in proof of it that we have learnt to call the noblest virtues by the most ignominious appellations? that devotion is *enthusiasm*, that conscientiousness is *scrupulosity*, that integrity is *obstinacy*, that non-conformity to fashionable tho' unreasonable notions, and to polite tho' immoral practices, is *superstition*, *weakness*, and *preciseness*? Are these the proofs of our christianity?

Will you go into our streets and thence collect the evidences of intemperance, sensuality and profaneness, which will not fail very soon to meet you there?—Will you go into the scenes
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of mercantile and commercial life, and thence collect the selfish projects, the ordinary deceptions, the authorized frauds, the systematic over-reachings which Tradition not Reason, which Custom not Religion, have sanctified? will you thence collect the instances of those who, hastening to be rich, have fallen into divers snares; who impatient of poverty, of mediocrity, of inferior affluence, thro' the instigation of avarice or ambition, have from day to day adventured, and at length accomplished, the ruin of many other families as well as of their own?—Will you go into the scenes of public entertainment, and there in the most innocent of such scenes, observe a sight conspicuous indeed to the serious eye, the Ministers of Luxury and Vanity, the Panders of an outrageous appetite for pleasure, more punctually met, more freely attended, and, almost beyond credit, more liberally rewarded than the Ministers of Virtue, the Instructors of Youth, and the Dispensers of the bread of life?—Will you change the scenes of public entertainment for the scenes of public devotion, will you there collect the giddy creatures who go thither for no better purposes than those which carry them to every other concourse? will you there collect the Formalists whose religion rests in the hearing of the word and the praying of the prayer? will you there note down those who have not even *so* much grace, whose vanity, insensibility, impertinence, loquacity, does not leave them

them even at the doors of the house of God?—

Will you quit these public scenes, for scenes more retired and domestic? will you thence collect the silly, insipid, unedifying conversation? will you there observe how fast time flows, and how folly flows as fast? will you observe how seldom the bounds of innocence are kept; how commonly such assemblies are erected into uncandid and iniquitous tribunals, where the practices, the manners, the customs, the conduct of others, as innocent as our own, are tried by our own prejudices, and by that test condemned; where the affairs of others occupy an impertinent concern, while our own most important affairs, both in company and in solitude are neglected; in such scenes will you observe how often some absent character is sacrificed to pride, to self-conceit, to malignity and ill-will; and how often the very best characters there present, are rudely pained and unfeelingly affronted by the worst?—From these less public will you go into still more private scenes of life? Will you enquire into the government of servants; into the education of children; will you produce me some evidence of our christianity from these?—If servants serve their masters, what care is there whether they serve God or not? if children are accomplished, what care is there whether they be good?

Education is not formed *against* the world
but *for* it; not to arm us against temptations,
but

but to betray us to them.—To *live*, to *shine*, these are the objects of education, which seldom rises higher, in one half of the world, than the attainment of some mechanic or some liberal art; and in the other half, than the acquisition of external accomplishments. To live well, unblameably, laudably, and usefully; to be adorned with the true beauty of universal unaffected virtue; to shine in the solid glories of pure and undefiled religion, is this the object of the Many? their object for themselves? their object for their children?—The imposing varnish of hollow manners, how often is it suffered to take place, in our praises and our cares, of sincere and substantial goodness? ——— Are the houses of their fathers to the rising generation the schools of piety, of self-government, of sober-mindedness? Alas, here it is that they first learn to neglect their Creator, and to neglect their souls. Here it is that they first imbibe the principles of frivolism, of vanity, of extravagance. Here it is that they learn to make amusement the *end* of life. Here it is that they early receive those impressions, and acquire those habits which, in a manner, preclude the possibility of acquiring a taste for *real* pleasure, and a capacity of solid worth. Here it is that they learn to seek for happiness from abroad, to go abroad in quest of it, and to fetch it in, as they expect, from every thing that smiles and glitters in the eye of vain Imagination. Here it is that they learn to admire
what

what is not admirable, to love what is not lovely, to dread what is not dreadful, to place the point of honor where it cannot stand, to laugh at those things which are not ridiculous, to make light of that which is very serious, and to play with those things that are dangerous as firebrands, arrows, and death. Here it is that they learn to think duty *dulness*, time a *burden*, pastimes *business*, solitude *melancholy*, self-conversation *stupid* and *insupportable*. Here it is that they receive the seeds of that little, selfish, pilfering, disaccomplishing, time-consuming, passion-stirring, heart-corrupting practice, Gaming. Here it is that they acquire a taste for those romantic visions, licentious novels, and seducing dramas, which inspire, foster and embolden the very worst of passions; which suggest the very falsest notions of human life; which excite the very vainest expectations from it, and tend most powerfully to disqualify for all its most important offices.

Education thus neglected, thus perverted, can you wonder at the frivolousness, the irreligion, the dissipations, the impertinences, the extravagances of the age? Can you wonder at the brutal sensuality of vulgar minds? Can you wonder that those who esteem themselves the excellent of the earth, should even glory in *their* more *refined* corruption? Is the degeneracy of manners any marvel? These things considered, what is it astonishing that the general
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emulation should be in nothing great,—in nothing good,—in vanity, in luxury, in pomp, in show, in fantastic elegance, in tasteless singularity, in inconvenient and unrighteous expences, in spurning at the rank wherein they have been born, in aspiring to a superior station, in anticipating the manners of the ranks they envy and aspire to, in daring to allow themselves in that which they condemn, in bidding bold defiance to religion, to virtue, to decorum, to propriety, to prudence? What wonder that vanity should produce extravagance, that extravagance should produce need, that need should create dependence and ensnare integrity, and prepare the way, both in public and in private life, for crimes, corruption, and oppression? In such a country, what wonder that fashion should take place of reason, that politeness should usurp the rank of uprightness, that affectation, artifice, and insincerity should be taught by system with applause, and that in such a system licentiousness should accompany hypocrisy with every other species of falshood and seduction?

Is *this* the land where the law of God is heard?—'Tis preached.—But is unbelief, is vanity, is luxury, is profaneness, is libertinism the less criminal because the gospel is preached in the land where these things are practised? Are these the proof that the ear is not turned away from hearing the law? Are these your
hope

hope that the prayer of such a people shall not be abomination? If the gospel-law is a law of piety, of charity, of purity, what reason have we not to fear that the ear of God is shut against us, and that, to use the language of the prophet, "It is iniquity even this day's solemn meeting?"

Will the confession of *heresies* and *schisms* amongst us, the tendency of which confession is to abridge the common rights of Christians, to alienate the mind from free enquiry and from those who presume to make it, to render odious practices and opinions which the church has not established, though the gospel may have done it, and to sanctify practices and opinions which, though the gospel has not established them, have been established by an usurpation on the authority of Christ; the tendency of which confession is to contract the hearts which the gospel was intended to dilate, and to impair the peace which was the last bequest of Jesus to the churches; will such confessions come up with approbation and acceptance into the ear of that God, whose command it is that we "search the scriptures; that every man be fully persuaded in his own mind; that we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free?"—Will hard names and unchristian judgments in the devotions of this day, render those devotions an acceptable sacrifice to God?—Will interested and adulatory addresses presented at an

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earthly throne; will addresses as sanguinary as they were adulatory; will congratulations and thanksgivings for the blood that has been shed, if not needlessly and wantonly, yet actually and freely shed; will these things cancel all our other guilt, in the eye of that God, whose character is mercy, to whom we are taught to pray "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them, that trespass against us," and whose command it is that when we pray for Kings and those who are in authority, we lift up to him *holy hands, without wrath and without striving*?—Do these things forebode a happy issue of our present circumstances? Do they revive the hopes which the general recollection of our national unworthiness would cause to languish? Do they embolden us to confide in the counsels of Counsellors whose character is not piety; and in the arms of Warriors, among whom though there *are* believing Centurions and devout Soldiers who serve their maker while they serve their country, who fear God while they honor the king, who are *not ashamed* of pure and incorruptible manners, who disdain that insignificance and libertinism, which the public opinion, false to the maxims of the gospel, and alike false to the dictates of reason, looks for, allows, and encourages in this profession; yet these are not many, while the generality, formed out of the refuse of the earth, serving the community in this, because of a more serious occupation they were incapable, or of a less idle

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one impatient, in evil times are naturally the worst of evil men, and though they arrogate to themselves, exclusively in a manner, the character of honor, are nevertheless of all men, it may be, the most unprincipled, irreligious and licentious?

Are such thy champions, thy counsellors, thy character, thy circumstances, O my country? Ah, see you not in these things the marks of a God-forfaking and a God-forsaken people?

“ The Lord looketh from heaven, and beholdeth all the sons of men : from the place of his habitation he looketh on the inhabitants of the earth, and he considereth all their works.” Can he look with pleasure upon Britain? Can he look with approbation on her vices growing as his mercies to her have been multiplied? Can he see with pleasure the land that he hath cared for, forgetting that glorious and fearful name the Lord their God? Can he see with pleasure those to whom the lines are fallen in such pleasant places, alienated in their minds from God, and turning away from *him* of whom they hold so goodly an inheritance? With complacency can he see them, unattached to him by the remembrance of national deliverances so great and numerous, unmelted by the long enjoyment and increase of so many mercies, unimpressed by his warnings and his chastisements as much as by his liberalities and tenderness?

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With complacency can he behold that land which he has founded on the floods and guarded by the seas; which he has made the residence of health and the treasury of plenty; in which, notwithstanding many dangers from domestic tyranny and foreign violence, he has fixed the seat of liberty; which by many wonderful events he has emancipated from the chains of darkness and of superstition; on which he has shed down the brightest glories of the evangelic day; and where he has erected the comeliest temple of religion: With complacency and pleasure can he behold this land sending war and terror cross the ocean; pleased with the devastations she has already made, and preparing to make more; in public as well as private life sacrificing humanity to honor; abroad, envying to her own flesh and blood the benefits of equal law and British liberty; at home, licentious in her liberty, wanton in her plenty, full and denying God, trampling, without remorse and without care, alike on the doctrine and the precepts of his gospel?

May I speak of God, the father of mercies, as the friend, the patient, the long-suffering friend of Britain? With what justice and propriety then may we not image to ourselves this gracious God, yearning with the bowels of fatherly compassion over her, still stretching out his hand to this gainsaying people, and calling to them as to Israel of old, "You only have

have I known of all the families of the earth, and shall I not visit you for these things? Britain, what shall I do unto thee? What can be done more for my vineyard that has not been done in it? Oh, Britain, how shall I give thee up? How shall I make *thee* as Admah? How shall I set *thee* as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, and my repentings are enkindled together. Oh that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea. Turn thee at my rebuke and I will lay by the fierceness of mine anger. Know thou, in this thy day, the things that belong unto thy peace. Be wise, understand this, consider thy latter end. Oh that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, for then it should be well with them and with their children for ever." Thus speaks the patience, and the long-suffering of God. But if ye abuse his patience, and set at nought his counsel, and will none of his reproof, what says the holiness, the righteousness, and the regal character of God? "I have spoken unto you rising early and speaking, but ye hearkened not unto me: I have sent you my servants rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, but ye have not inclined your ear nor hearkened unto me: therefore thus saith the Lord God of hosts, I will repent me of

of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them, and I will bring upon the inhabitants of this land all the evil that I thought to do unto them, because I have spoken unto them but they have not heard, and I have called unto them but they have not answered. Because they would none of my counsels they shall be filled with their own devices: because they have set at nought my reproof I will laugh at their calamity and mock when their fear cometh.

✧ The priests and the people have transgressed very much, and polluted the heritage of God, they have mocked the messengers of God, they have despised his word, they have misused his prophets, therefore the wrath of the Lord shall arise against this people till there be no remedy." These are *serious* words. There is *some* meaning in them: and that meaning, Britain, is not inapplicable to thee. For, say if it is not truer of this than of any other land, that its privileges and its guilt resemble the privileges and the guilt of Israel. Say if it is not true that the Lord hath *actually* taken up a controversy with this people.

It appears not yet in famine, or in pestilence, or in foreign quarrels and dissensions: but appears it not in the inefficacy of God's word and ordinances, in the blindness of eye and hardness of heart that have seized this people? Appears it not in divided counsels and alienated affections? Appears it not in the want of disposition, or of power, or of success to maintain the harmony

mony and union of the family of Britain? Appears it not in the blood with which the coasts of America have been stained, in the promptitude and zeal of her invaders, in the ashes of her cities, in the sword which she has drawn, not, she says, to injure you in any of your rights; but to maintain herself in the possession of what God and Nature gave her? When the parent arms against the child, and the child against the parent, is the blessing of God, are the smiles of heaven on that family? Are such dissensions the mildest, the gentlest, and the earliest of God's judgments? Do they signify that his wrath is kindled but a little? Alas, how great must the infatuation be, that can indulge to pleasing visions, in a circumstance where Defeat and Victory are alike inglorious and ruinous?

But what reason, some may ask, for such gloomy apprehensions? Say not that the former days were better than these; for in this thou sayest not wisely. What is there peculiar in the guilt of Britain *now*, that still she may not hope to see the sun return after the clouds, that still she may not say unto herself "I sit a Queen, among the isles, and shall see no sorrow?"

I will tell you *one* thing, and to that I could add more: There is *this* peculiar in her present situation, that Britain never yet lay under the

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tokens

tokens of divine displeasure when she did so largely and so righteously deserve them. Now, she has abused *more* mercies, withstood *more* warnings, and put the patience and forbearance of God to *greater* insult, and to *longer* trial. As God will not always chide, so neither will he always connive at sin to the encouragement of presumptuous transgression. His vengeance will not always sleep. You could tell me of occasions when "Awake, O sword" has been the language of God, and it may be that even now, you see its avenging gleams flashing on the guilty nations. Yet, still, still, notwithstanding this "because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, the heart of the sons of Britain is fully set in them to do evil."

But, perhaps, you think that there are no evidences that the patience of God is wearing out: no symptoms of decline: no signs of danger.

So thought Sodom and Gomorrah. So the Old World said: So said Babylon: So said Judæa and Jerusalem: and so said imperial Rome. — There is always danger in departing from the living God. As he can save, so he can destroy by what is little as well as by what is great; by few as perfectly as by many; suddenly and unexpectedly as well as perceptibly and by degrees. There are always in nature causes enow subsisting, and invisibly subsisting,

ing, to accomplish the ruin of communities and nations in a thousand different ways: to turn the fruitful field into a desert; the land of peace into a scene of cruelty and devastation; the land of liberty into the habitation of cheerless misery and tyrannical oppression. It is but to alter the arrangements in a Statesman's head, it is but to excite a tremor in a Soldier's heart, it is but to forbid the external world to concur with their plans and purposes, and the fairest prospects of victory and of prosperity are defeated. One blast of the breath of God can kindle up the flames that are already lighted, into a conflagration that shall utterly consume all you love, and the hope of all that you desire. With God it is but to say concerning any thing, "Let it be" and it is. *With* means or *without* means, *with* your foresight and expectation or *without* them, makes no difference to God.

But your adversaries are as guilty as yourselves; and if *you* have cause of apprehension, what have *they*?

It may be so. I know not that it is so; but if so you will have it, so let it be: and tell me, what pleasure, what comfort can you find in the contemplation, who but the *enemies* of Britain could rejoice in the contemplation, of the parent feeding on the carnage of her children,

and herself at last expiring by the wounds of her descendants?

But suppose these things are so, what is it to you? Have you any share in the national demerit? have you any power to controul the purposes of providence?

To the first of these inquiries your own consciences shall answer. Propose the question to them in sincerity and truth, and receive, what they say to you, in meekness and humility.

The purposes of providence are uncontroulable. "God is of one mind, and who can turn him? His counsel standeth firm for ever, and the thoughts of his heart unto all generations." Yet these, we know, are among the maxims of his government, "That it shall be well with the righteous: That tho' the sacrifices of the wicked are abomination in his sight, the prayer of the upright is his delight."—We know that there was a city where if ten righteous had been found, that city had been saved. We know too, that there was a people among whom tho' Noah, Daniel, and Job had been, that people should not have been saved; but Noah, Daniel, and Job, by their righteousness, *should* have delivered their own souls.—"All things shall work together for good to those who love God." They who forsake him not shall not be forsaken by him.

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Hear then, my friends: Your country, your adversaries, your own souls are suitors to you for your prayers and your obedience. If you have any predilection for your native land; if you have any sympathy for those whom though Oceans separate, yet the same blood, the same language, the same interests unite them to you; if you have any feeling for what is most tenderly beloved by you, for the wife of your bosom, for the friend of your heart, for the children of your hopes, "turn not away your ear from hearing the law, lest your prayers should be abomination."

That Britain gave you birth, should this provoke you to plant a dagger in her heart? That America, *your* America acknowledges the same common parents; that she accosts you by all the tender names of friendship and of kindred, of father, son, and brother; that she is united to you by all the sacred ties of christian communion as well as natural relation; should this provoke you to dye her rivers with the blood of your own progeny, and to manure her fields with your own flesh?

No, my friends, *your* virtues and *your* prayers shall do what *can* be done to stay the devouring sword, and to bid both your country and your country's adversaries prosper. If that cannot be; if the decree is issued, and the ocean of divine judgments must swell till it overwhelms
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both the Western and the Eastern world; your piety and duty will still give you hope of some saving Ark, of some excepted Zoar, of some modern Pella, some secure asylum, where you shall see the ruin and have no part in it.—

But *that* were a *painful* fight—The better hope, and thanks be to God, the more probable expectation is, that when the world can be profited no longer by their virtues and their prayers, “the righteous shall be taken away from the evil to come,” by a timely and a not unwelcome death translated to that better world, where Crowns and Kingdoms, and all the Competitions of them, shall be looked down upon as nothing, and where men of every nation, of every tongue, and of every kindred, whatever were the interferences of their interests in this world, shall be for ever safe, for ever friendly, and for ever happy, under the almighty and immortal empire of the God of Love.

THE END.